



TEXT ON PRACTICE

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ON PRACTICE

My current practice is a whirlpool, typically caused by the meeting of currents it contains image making and writing about workers, informal economies, sketchy businesses, and their relations. I am interested in the logic of productivity, and specifically productivity in relation to the monetary promise of progress. My work is about modes of work in a Capitalocene era¹. I am thus interested in the role of the informal economy and its capacity of resistance. My aim is to investigate how do all the different bodies, commodities and skimpy trades relate, react and coexist with each other.

RECENT WORK

My recent project “To Each Their Own” is a short fiction film about a group of people from Betondorp neighbourhood in Amsterdam who are hustling in different ways to get by. The main character Nova and her best friend Oliver are meeting their ends day-to-day through different means online, other people in the neighbourhood rely on the gig economy: they drive Ubers, freelance for food or parcel delivery.

The characters are introduced through the point of view of the main character Nova, who is a confident Gen-Z'er (early twenties), she does not bother to work for her money, instead she sells her worn panties online. Nova knows who's buying her panties and is willing to increase her sales in

¹ Donna Haraway (and other writers). I refer to it as perceived absurdities, contradictions, crises, injustices, inequality, and exploitation created by modern business development.

order to pay her rent. Her friend Oliver, the master of “side-gigs”², recommends her how to be more efficient. All of the characters are believable, typical contemporary types: on the one hand highly educated and privileged to a degree, on the other lacking the opportunities to find long-term housing, income, stability, etc. Precarity is here the key term. The characters have big dreams, but obviously the prospects in the long run are quite sad.



While making the short fiction film *To Each Their Own* I wanted to challenge myself to work with a ‘professional film crew i.e. having a full house of departments, (camera, art direction, light). This approach was certainly inspired by my experience in the industry as an art director; although it also have worked against itself. It was quite hard to organize everyone on the same date (also due to omicron variant at that time), as well as it was a challenge to ask people to work for free. And here’s an Irony - I even wanted to sell worn panties myself to finance the film, but it felt as if I’d be exploiting the sellers, - and honestly as I made an online account for it I figured it was none of my kinky cups of teas. The subject matter carries some intrinsic implications that are out my league.

Another challenge was scriptwriting, as I didn’t fully develop my characters and their inner conflicts, the story line didn’t really work as a unified whole, it even became slightly flat. I accept it as a good try out and a lesson to not rush the filming process in the future. I’ve also learned to take less tasks on my own shoulders as I was producing, directing, making the production design, editing etc.

CURRENT WORK

While developing new work, I decided to change methods.

My current work is the one of text and syntax which I want to translate to imagery. I am researching the informal economies, reading about street vendors and other precarious, mostly illegal occupations. For now, while yet searching for the research topic I stumble upon the idea of philosophizing the hustle: can I materialize it? Can my own currents phoethisize it?

² ways of making extra money by (re)selling online; also called a side hustle.

At the moment my approach is to interview two Lithuanian workers who live in Zaandam, one of them Marius works for Albert Hijn grocery delivery and Lada works in a meat factory.

My interview plan is not to question how it feels to work there, but rather it is about the workers physical relation to work and the works environment. The questionnaire is: what ? Where? What colour? What structure? Texture? What smell? Standing or sitting? Alone or collaboratively? What objects? After collecting this data I want to experiment with translating it into images, soundtracks or maybe tangible objects.

Currently I am re-reading a book by Olga Ravn *The Employees* : A workplace novel of the 22nd century. It's called a novel but it is rather structured as a diary or a collection of notes, written in a form of statements by space ship workers. We do not know who commissioned these notes. The book is exploring different layers of productivity mastered on a spaceship; the employees, their relation to the workplace and the objects placed in the ship. Generally the book is about a workplace culture, questioning the logic of productivity and the meaning of being a human. I adore this book because it challenges the formula of writing and forms of storytelling at its core, its vagueness makes you question what is truth in regard to our own perspective.

Inspired by this, I aim my next project to be loose from a linear format, and I want the project evolve it's form (physicaly or digitaly) lose from narrative scheme, continuity, or in other words loose from beginnings and ends, loose from intro, body and conclusion.

My new project is a meltdown between real stories and fiction. The fictitious is the romantic, but also the necessary for me at the moment, since I cannot grasp the method of actually interviewing or getting people on camera.

*Make case studies, investigate whats important.
Investigate notions of work, productivity and payment.*

I believe I also need to narrow down to the specific fields of labour — make a selection based on executed work; only physical work, only street vending, household, berry and mushroom pickers etc. (Note: I wanted and still want to make work about illegal street trades, but for that I need to go abroad for some time this summer)

ABSTRACT

Can we think of the informal worker as an employee of a viable system, where the government doesn't monitor their activities and the award isn't always monetary?

In the essay "The Informal Economy" Alejandro Portes and William Haller write on its importance:

"The informal economy may be characterized as a constructed response by civil society to unwanted state interference. The universal character of the phenomenon reflects the considerable capacity of resistance in most societies to the exercise of state power. [...] Second, the goods and services provided by informal producers lower the costs of consumption for formal workers and the costs of production and distribution for formal firms, thus contributing to their viability. [...] The fourth paradox of the informal economy is that it commonly yields a series of positive effects for the state, the very institution charged with its suppression. [...] Through these mechanisms, the informal economy contributes to the political stability and economic viability of poorer nations. These realities help explain why informal activities are commonly tolerated by many governments, in contradiction to

their law-enforcement duties.”³

I am thinking about the mushroom pickers and the berry sellers. Next to it I want to think of the importance of labour carried out by caretakers and maintenance workers. Practises like motherhood and cleaning the house, doesn't pay much, but are essential to our existence. How do we relate to that? And our society and economy constantly promise us progress, in a Neo-liberal paradise, but what are the ideas of progress for the informal worker? All these question I want to explore in my future projects.

NEXT

I'd like my next project to be shifting towards speculative fabulation.⁴ This was highly influenced by Laura's Huertas Millán course called The Ethics of Documentary Filmmaking, which opened new doors in ways of thinking about documentary and fiction — actually merging them in order to tell a story. For me this fuse revives the new ways of story telling. Moreover, we were discussing a notion of 'speaking nearby'⁵ which is about making work not from an anthropological observers perspective, but rather from the insiders point of view. As I am a precarious worker myself, hustling myself to get by, I think it could provide a more honest way of working about my selected topics. And for now before I go, I want to continue writing. I want to write little stories, maybe fictionalized scripts and make small try outs. For now I will need to narrow down my interest to a specific group of people, and I'd need someone to guide me through my writing.

I've some ideas for small try outs to write small fiction stories about the 'street employees; write and film small fictional scenes with actors based on real stories. For this I'd need to delve deeper into character development, conflict and other dramatic points of a storytelling practice. I think this would be a good exercise to start with before I go on a field trip. *Thanks for reading.*

³ The Handbook of Economic Sociology - Alejandro Portes and William Haller

⁴ Donna Haraway

⁵ TRINH T. MINH-HA